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ABSTRACT

The advent of the human potential movement has generated the expectation that educators unleash the intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual talents of students. This movement is characterized by its focus on (1) the person as a total being, (2) the needs and concerns of students, (3) phenomenology, (4) personal values and goals, and (5) positivity. These basic ideas and an interest in their integration with the physical person resulted in the development of a course at the University of Massachusetts and Hampshire College entitled Education of the Self Through Physical Activities. The course meets for three one-hour sessions weekly and has a premise that peoples' behavior in an activity is a mirror of their psychological state. The course uses physical activities to increase students' understanding of their own thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Each student selects a sport or physical activity to participate in outside of class on a weekly basis and keeps a journal of his/her participation. Class time is spent reviewing the journals and providing ways to increase self knowledge. After individual students have chosen their sport for the semester, they receive a set of questions that stimulates possible new awareness about themselves. The course also emphasizes allowing students to define their own standards of performance and excellence, rather than being regimented to fail against standards that only apply to exceptional athletes. (DMT)

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ALTERNATIVES IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION RESPONDING TO THREE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

(A. The Human Potential Movement)

Roy T. Tamashiro

With the advent of the human potential movement in the late 1960's it has become a matter of social and educational imperative to do all we can to develop personal capabilities. The growing public awareness that we, as human beings, use less than one percent of our potentials, has generated the enormous expectation that teachers unlease students' potential talents: intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual. Teachers are expected to lead students down the royal road toward self-actualization. Most of us, as physical educators, believe in these ideals, and we want to respond to these aspirations. But many of us have found ourselves not equipped with specific curricula to bring about the self-enhancement we aim for.

In the next few minutes, I will describe one course involving physical activities which has tried to reflect the new consciousness of the human potential movement. Before describing the course, I shall outline the features of the movement.

The humanistic or human potential movement can be characterized by some features identified by Sargent(1973) in his article, "The Humanistic Approach to Personality."

First, there is a focus on the whole person. This means that we should deal with all aspects of individuals. We should remove the artificial academic separations between intellect and emotion; between mind and body; and between the barriers that separate one discipline from the next.

Second, an intense caring for people. Education should emphasize the needs

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and concerns of students, more than society's needs or the needs of the subject matter.

Third, a phenomenological emphasis. We should be less concerned with facts of the world, and more concerned with how individuals themselves see and interpret the world. Subjective knowledge is as important as objective, public knowledge.

Fourth, personal values, purposes and goals are of central significance. Human beings understand and act through having purposes, through valuing and through creating and recognizing meanings. People's intentions are the basis on which they build their identity, so crucial to their humanness.

Fifth, emphasis on the positive. Education should not be so concerned with forcing people to conform or adjust to certain standards. There are many routes to self-actualization, and the higher human qualities can be cultivated regardless of a person's apparent limitations.

On the basis of these humanistic ideas, Joy Hardin and I developed a course integrating them with the physical. The course is called Education of the Self Through Physical Activities. It has been taught over the last four years at the University of Massachusetts and at Hampshire College. It meets for three-hour sessions weekly, throughout the semester.

The course uses physical activities to increase students' understanding of their own thoughts, emotions and behaviors; that is, their self-knowledge; so that their ability to be more intentional is increased.

The premise of the course is that people's behavior in a physical activity mirrors their psychological state. A person's behavior in a physical activity mirrors his or her psychological state. For example, a baseball player who consistently swings at the ball early may be doing so because eagerness and over-enthusiasm are psychological patterns or habits.

In the course, each student selects a sport or physical activity to participate

in on a regular weekly basis--jogging, tennis, weightlifting, horseback riding were examples from previous semesters. They do their sport outside of class and keep a journal of their participation. Class time is spent reviewing the journals and providing ways to increase self-knowledge.

To illustrate how self-knowledge is integrated with physical activity in the course, I would like to describe one exercise we do. After individual students have chosen their sport for the semester, we ask a set of questions that stimulates possible new awarenesses about themselves. Imagine what your answers to these questions might be, if you were a student in this class.

First, what is one word that characterizes the essence of the sport for you? Second, what is one mental image that characterizes the essence of the sport for you? Third, how are the word and image you chose important or significant to you? And fourth, in what other areas in your life--your job, your home, your social relationships--are these important values reflected?

As a student in the class you would have a few minutes to think and record any insights you gained from these questions. Then you would get to hear people who wished to tell their answers. I'll tell you mine.

The sport I would choose for the spring semester would be tennis. In answering the first question, the word that captured the essence of the sport for me ~~he was~~ "balanced-stretching." The image for me was a bird in graceful flight. Both "balanced-stretching" and the bird in graceful flight seemed to symbolize mobility, freedom and flight for me. Mobility and independence are important values to me. In what other areas in my life are these values reflected? I thought of how I relate to other people, both male and female. I am afraid of real closeness or intimacy. I am afraid if I get too close to a person, I would lose my freedom. I would lose my mobility, and I would be restricted.

Before answering these questions, I did not know I lodged this fear of closeness in me. The structured questions seemed to bring to my awareness an issue

that I may want to explore further in myself. The course provides a supportive atmosphere and a structure to conduct this exploration. Of course, most of this work is done through processing one's participation in the physical activity.

You can see then that the course is an attempt to create and envision a physical education that addresses new awarenesses brought about by the human potential movement. There is a focus on the whole person. Rather than keeping the physical isolated from the intellectual, emotional and social, this course integrates psychological concerns with physical activities. The central consideration of students' emotions and thoughts in this course, without abusing or exploiting them, reflects the caring for people, so important in the human potential movement. Valuing each person's experiences in their sport as unique and significant brings us closer to a phenomenological emphasis. The structured questions and other exercises used in the course increase students' conscious knowledge of their own values, beliefs, purposes and goals, thereby enabling them to be more intentional. And finally we find an emphasis on the positive in allowing students to define their own standards of performance and excellence, rather than being regimented to fail, against standards that only apply to super-athletes. The idea here is that you can translate each of the features of the human potential movement into specific curricula.

In summary, I have told you about a course involving physical activities which reflects the features of the human potential movement. Physical education is a natural place where human values can be cultivated. And, aspirations of the human potential movement are not unreachable ideals for physical educators. You can transform rhetoric into actual curricula that can increase people's self-knowledge and thereby improve the quality and depth of their experiences.

REFERENCE

Sargent, S. S., "The Humanistic Approach to Personality," in B. Wolman(Ed.) Handbook of General Psychology, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1973, pp. 817-825.